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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000614

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: A. STATE 101248

[1](#)B. BANJUL 386
[1](#)C. STATE 160005
[1](#)D. BANJUL 422

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The senior presidential advisor, Secretary General Njie, indicated a desire to engage with us on steps the GOTG needed to take in seeking reinstatement of MCA eligibility. At the same time, he cited President Jammeh's ongoing resentment over the suspension of eligibility as well as irritation caused by human rights-related criticism by a non-USG institution, the Carter Center. Ambassador urged GOTG's cooperation with a proposed project here by the National Democratic Institute. We will continue to press the GOTG for engagement on addressing the policy slippages that led to loss of MCA eligibility, but it remains to be seen whether Jammeh will give the green light. END SUMMARY.

NEXT STEPS ON MCA

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador met October 3 with the senior presidential advisor, Secretary General Mambury Njie and referred to the Millenium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) June 16 decision to suspend The Gambia's eligibility for the Millenium Challenge Account (MCA) program (refs a and b). Ambassador underscored the Embassy's readiness for discussion with the GOTG on steps it needed to take in pursuit of reinstatement for eligibility. He added that, with regard to the MCC's upcoming FY-2007 eligibility review process, the Embassy would convey to the GOTG The Gambia's "scorecard" with rankings on the eligibility criteria as soon as we received this information (ref c).

[1](#)3. (C) In response, Njie said the GOTG would welcome the opportunity to discuss with us the actions it should take to address the policy slippages that had led to suspension of eligibility. However, he went on to indicate that President Jammeh remained resentful over the MCC's "abrupt and overly-hasty" decision to suspend. Ambassador responded that he had given the GOTG advance notice of the suspension and that GOTG officials, during their March 2006 visit to Washington, had likewise received warnings from both MCC and the Department of the prospect of suspension due to slippages in the GOTG's performance. He reiterated the need for the GOTG to focus now on addressing the shortfalls in performance so as to begin a process that could lead MCC to consider reinstatement.

RESENTMENT TOWARD CARTER CENTER

14. (C) Njie stated that, following the MCA eligibility suspension, Jammeh was further upset by a Carter Center press release that criticized the GOTG's performance on human rights. (NOTE: Njie was referring to an August 24 press release issued by the Carter Center in response to what it saw as a local media report that, according to the center, distorted the content of a July 24 private letter from former President Carter to Jammeh. According to the press release, the local media report wrongly cast Carter's letter as supportive of Jammeh's policies and, as a result, the Carter Center was compelled to set the record straight by noting that the letter's focus was on the need for improvement in the GOTG's human rights performance. Copy of the press release being e-mailed to AF/W. Njie said he would provide us with a copy of Carter's letter, as we have not seen it. END NOTE.) Ambassador replied that Carter did not speak for the USG, while noting that we shared his evident concern over the human rights situation here.

NDI VISIT

15. (C) Ambassador noted the current visit to The Gambia by representatives of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), saying that while this organization was autonomous of the USG, we nonetheless supported its global efforts on behalf of democracy-building. He urged the GOTG's cooperation with the proposed NDI project to work with political parties here in the run-up to the National Assembly elections in January. Njie responded that he saw "no problem" with the NDI going ahead with its project.

COMMENT

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16. (C) In his July 2 meeting with visiting AF DAS Thomas-Greenfield (ref d), Jammeh made clear the depth of his resentment over the suspension of MCA eligibility. Judging from Secgen Njie's remarks, that resentment remains strong, and likely explains why GOTG officials have so far refrained from engaging with us in any serious way on steps needed to address policy slippages in pursuit of reinstatement -- despite our repeated indications of readiness for such engagement. It was evident from Njie's comments that he wished to begin the consultation process with us, but it remains to be seen whether he will obtain the green light from his President to do so. END COMMENT.
STAFFORD